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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Thirtieth session

Summary record of the 647th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 30 January 2004, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. Açar

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The meeting was called to order at 4.25 p.m.

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its thirtieth session (CEDAW/C/2004/I/L.1, CEDAW/C/2004/I/CRP.3 and Add.1-8, and CEDAW/C/2004/II/1)

1. **The Chairperson** said she took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report on its thirtieth session in documents CEDAW/C/2004/I/L.1 and CEDAW/C/2004/I/CRP.3, and Add.1-7, as amended.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **Ms. Kapalata** (Rapporteur) introduced the draft report of the Working Group of the Whole, contained in document CEDAW/C/2004/I/CRP.3/Add.8, as amended. The report included details of the Committee's decisions addressed to States parties and of actions taken by the Committee under agenda items 6, 7 and 8. She also introduced the Committee's provisional agenda for the thirty-first session, which was contained in document CEDAW/C/2004/II/1.

4. **The Chairperson** said she took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report of the Working Group of the Whole (CEDAW/C/2004/I/CRP.3/Add.8), as amended, and the provisional agenda for the thirty-first session (CEDAW/C/2004/II/1).

5. *It was so decided.*

6. **The Chairperson** said she took it that the Committee wished to adopt its draft report on the thirtieth session in its entirety and to entrust the Rapporteur with its finalization.

7. *It was so decided.*

8. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that she wished to congratulate the Committee on the adoption of general recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures, which would provide critical guidance to States parties on article 4 (1) of the Convention. The United Nations itself had relied on article 4 as the basis for the implementation of special measures in order to achieve the staff gender balance target of 50/50. She also welcomed the fact that the Committee had taken the first steps towards adopting its next general recommendation, which would relate to article 2. The Committee's ongoing attempts to enhance its working methods were encouraging. Its responsibility to consider reports was now complemented by its responsibilities under the Optional Protocol. Traditionally, the Committee considered the reports of eight States parties at each session, and there were now 35 reports from States parties awaiting consideration. She trusted that the Committee, at its informal meeting in May, would consider carefully the implications of that number when planning future sessions.

9. She wished to congratulate the Committee on its meeting with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, particularly in view of the importance of the coordination and mutual reinforcement of mandates relating to human rights mechanisms. The Committee had also been the first treaty body to be briefed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the work currently under way in the Secretariat to implement the guidance provided by the second inter-committee meeting and the meeting of Chairpersons regarding an expanded core document and harmonized reporting guidelines. Together with the other human rights treaty bodies, the Committee would continue working to that end in order to achieve the goal of enhanced implementation of all human rights instruments at the domestic level.

10. The forthcoming sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights would be critical opportunities to focus the attention of the intergovernmental processes on the work of the Committee and its contribution to the goal of gender equality. The planned event to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly would also serve as a platform for demonstrating the difference the Convention, and the Committee, had made to women across the globe.

11. Lastly, she informed the Committee that she would no longer be attending its meetings in her capacity as Special Adviser on Gender Issues, as she had decided to retire from the United Nations. Among the most satisfying developments that she had witnessed during her career was the steady improvement of awareness of women's human rights, due, in no small part, to the work of the Committee and it had been a source of encouragement to her to have worked closely with it.

12. **The Chairperson** recalled that eight reports had been considered at the Committee's thirtieth session, including two initial reports, namely, those of Bhutan and Kuwait. She welcomed the commitment made by those two States to submit their reports on a more regular basis. Several of the reporting States had been represented at a high level and several delegations had included technical experts, which had made it possible for the Committee to ask probing questions about important elements that facilitated or hindered the implementation of the Convention.

13. As usual, the Committee's concluding comments would be transmitted to States parties shortly after the closure of the session. She urged the reporting States to disseminate those comments as widely as possible, among both public officials and society at large, and hoped that they would form the basis for specific legislative initiatives, policy and programme development and administrative and other measures. In all instances, the Committee had emphasized the important role of civil society, particularly women's non-governmental organizations, in the promotion of women's human rights and the implementation of the Convention and, in that connection, had encouraged States parties to facilitate the participation of civil society in those areas. Parliamentarians also played a crucial role in that regard, and she drew the attention of the Committee to the imminent availability of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol in all United Nations languages.

14. With regard to the status of the implementation of the Convention in the reporting States, she pointed out that a number of common factors had emerged. Those factors related primarily to issues falling under article 5, namely the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and took different forms in different countries. However, in all instances, the Committee had taken the firm view that States parties had a clear obligation under the Convention to act forcefully and creatively to eliminate discriminatory practices without delay. While tradition and cultural diversity were certainly sources of richness for a country, they would not be allowed to function as impediments to women's enjoyment of their human rights.

15. The Committee had noticed progress in many areas, such as the adoption of legislative amendments, and had assessed national gender-equality action plans, sectoral policies and gender mainstreaming activities. In some countries, courts were playing an increasingly active role by directly invoking the Convention in order to create jurisprudence in the area of gender equality. However, there was a need for more emphasis on reports and on activities undertaken at the national level to assess the impact of actions taken. States parties had therefore been encouraged to draw up timetables for implementing particular actions and to carry out monitoring in order to take corrective action, where necessary. The Committee had also stressed the importance of information campaigns in order to enhance awareness of the Convention.

16. The thirtieth session had also seen the culmination of the Committee's efforts to elaborate and adopt a general recommendation on article 4 (1) of the Convention. She was confident that general recommendation No. 25 would greatly facilitate understanding on how to use temporary special measures. Furthermore, the Committee had made significant progress with its work under the Optional Protocol: the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol had registered three communications, and the Committee had continued to implement its mandate under article 8 of the Protocol.

17. The Committee had continued to review the effectiveness of its working methods and would be holding an informal meeting in May to discuss aspects of the reporting process with a view to making that process more effective and efficient. There had been opportunities to engage in dialogue with a representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, concerning the reform of the human rights treaty system, and with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, regarding enhanced cooperation. Those exchanges had been fruitful and had given the Committee reason to expect that it would play an even more effective and comprehensive role within the framework of the United Nations human rights system.

18. During its thirtieth session, the Committee had once again focused its attention on the situation of women in Iraq. It had taken note of a decision taken by the Governing Council of Iraq to repeal existing civil statutes in the areas of marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance and had adopted a statement in support of the women of Iraq, which drew attention to the fact that Iraq was a State party to the Convention and emphasized the fundamental importance of women's

enjoyment of their human rights to the development of Iraqi society. The Committee called on all responsible authorities in Iraq, with the assistance of the international community, to ensure full implementation of and compliance with the provisions of the Convention.

19. Lastly, she said that she was moved by Ms. King's decision to retire from the United Nations. She wished to thank Ms. King for the support that she had given to the Committee and added that it was difficult to imagine the realm of women's issues without her presence.

Closure of the session

20. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairperson declared the thirtieth session closed.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.